

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 PC-01 NIC-01

OPR-01 /065 W

----- 011641

O 231635Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6884

INFO AMEMBASSY LOME IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 103

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, DM

SUBJ: COUP ATTEMPT IN PROGRESS

ABIDJAN FOR DATT; LOME FOR BISHOP

REF COTONOU 97

SUMMARY: KEREKOU HAS MOVED EVENTS INTO A NEW STAGE BY HAVING HIS MIN OF INFO BROADCAST A DENUNCIATION OF CAPT JANVIER ASSOGBA AND IMPLYING THAT THE GOVT WILL EFFECTIVELY DEAL WITH ASSOGBA'S ATTEMPT TO BRING DOWN THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVT. ASSOGBA'S ACTIONS HAVE BEEN CAST IN THE LIGHT OF AN ATTEMPT BY "INTERNATIONAL IMPERIALISM" TO SABOTAGE MARXISM-LENINISM. EMBASSY DOUBTS THAT  
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KEREKOU ACTUALLY HAS ASSOGBA IN CUSTODY AND THAT THINGS ARE OVER.

WE FORESEE THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ARMED CONFRONTATION BETWEEN  
TROOPS LOAY TO THE TWO SIDES. END SUMMARY

1. AT APPROX 1500 LOCAL ON AFTERNOON 23 JAN, MIN OF INFO AND NATIONAL  
ORIENTATION LT MARTIN DOHOU AZONHIHO, OFFICIAL GOVT SPOKESMAN  
GAVE A RADIO ADDRESS IN WHICH HE EXPLAINED THE EVENTS OF THE  
LAST FEW DAYS TO THE PUBLIC. HE ACCUSED ASSOGBA OF HAVING BEEN  
IN THE PAY OF THE "INTERNATIONAL IMPERIALISTS" WHO WERE TRYING  
TO THROW DAHOMEY OFF ITS CHOSEN MARXIST-LENINIST COURSE. ACCORD-  
ING TO AZONHIHO, ASSOGBA HAS BEEN STRIPPED OF HIS DUTIES AND  
CONFINED TO THE BARRACKS FOR 60 DAYS. OTHER "IMPERIALIST  
AGENTS" INVOLVED IN THE PLOT, HE SAID, WOULD BE BROUGHT TO  
JUSTICE. AMONG THESE IS A FORMER MIN OF FINANCE, NOW UNITED  
NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM RESIDENT REP IN DAKAR, BERTIN BORNA.  
THE MRGD SAID IT IS ASKING THE UN TO RETURN BORNA TO DAHOMEY.

2. THROUGH AZONHIHO, KEREKOU HAS DENIED ANY WRONGDOING IN THE  
"KOVACS AFFAIR". KEREKOU CLAIMED TO HAVE TURNED OVER ALL CORRES-  
PONDENCE FROM KOVASCs TO NICEPHORE SOGLO, HEAD OF THE COMMISSION  
INVESTIGATING THE AFFIAR, WELL BEFORE ASSOGBA MADE HIS PUBLIC  
DISCLOSURES. AZONHIHO DID NOT PLACE ANY OF THE BLAME ON THE  
OUIDAH TROOPS WHO SUPPORTED ASSOGBA, NOTING MERELY THAT HE HAD  
TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THEIR GOOD FAITH IN FOLLOWING A COMMANDING  
OFFICER.

3. PRIOR TO THE BORADCAST, A MESSAGE WAS REPEATEDLY PLAYED ON THE  
RADIO ORDERING ALL DAHOMENA MILITARY PERSONNEL ON LEAVE TO REPORT  
TO THEIR UNITS BY 1800 LOCAL TIME. THE TROOPS AT CAMP GUEZO  
IN COTONOU HAVE BEEN ON A STATE OF ALERT TO MARCH ON OUIDAH  
SINCE 1730 LAST NIGHT, 22 JAN.

4. EMBASSY HAS ONE UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT AS OF 1200, 23 JAN  
ASSOGBA WAS STILL WITH HIS TROOPS AT OUIDAH AND THAT A UNIT OF  
60 MEN (PROBABLY GENDARMES) WAS UNSUCCESSFUL IN AN ATTEMPT TO  
ARREST HIME..

COMMENT: THE AIM OF THE AZONHIHO BROADCAST WAS OBVIOUSLY  
TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT KEREKOU HAS THE SIUTATION IN HAND.  
IN LIGHT OF THE UNCONFIRMED REPORT OF ASSOGBA'S CONTINUED  
PRESENCE AT OUIDAH, THE CALL BACK OF ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL,  
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AND THE RELATIVELY LIGHT SANCTION IMPOSED ON ASSOGBA, WE CONSIDER  
THINGS TO BE FAR FROM SETTLED. ONE OF KEREKOU'S  
OBJECTIVES IS PROBABLY TO DISHEARTER ASSOGBA  
SUPPORTERS OUTSIDE OF OUIDAH.

6. THE PRESENT COUP ATTEMPT DIFFERS IN ONE SIGNIFICANT ASPECT  
FROM MOST OTHERS IN DAHOMEY'S LONG HISTORY OF COUPS, IN PITTING  
MILITARY AGAINST MILITARY. WE ASSUME THAT PREPARATIONS ARE UNDER-

WAY TO EITHER LAUNCH A MILITARY MOVE AGAINST OUIDAH GARRISON OR TO PREPARE FOR THE DEFENSE OF COTONOU AGAINST AN ASSAULT BY ASSOGBA'S FORCES. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IS THAT KEREKOU MAY LET ASSOGBA WAIT IN OUIDAH UNTIL HIS SUPPORT WANES AND ASSOGBA IS FORCED TO SURRENDER. THE NEXT 24 HOURS COULD BE DECISIVE. A REAL DANGER EXISTS THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF DAHOMEY LIVES WILL BE LOST IN AN ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE GOVERNMENT.

7. THE PUBLIC LINKING OF THIS ATTEMPTED COUP TO "INTERNATIONAL IMPERIALISM'S STRUGGLE AGAINST MARXISM-LENINISM PRESAGES AN EVEN HARDER LINE BY THE KEREKOU REGIME IF IT SUCCEEDS IN MAINTAINING ITSELF IN POWER.

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## Message Attributes

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